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Playing the Matrix: The Fate of Biocultural Diversity in Community Governance and Management of Protected Areas

Governance types Protected area categories	A. Governance by government			B. Shared governance			C. Private governance			D. Governance by indigenous peoples and local communities	
	Federal or national ministry or agency in charge	Sub-national ministry or agency in charge	Government-delegated management (e.g., to an NGO)	Transboundary management	Collaborative management (various forms of pluralist influence)	Joint management (pluralist management board)	Declared and run by individual land-owners	... by non-profit organizations (e.g., NGOs, universities)	... by for-profit organizations (e.g., corporate owners, cooperatives)	Indigenous peoples' protected areas and territories – established and run by indigenous peoples	Community conserved areas – declared and run by local communities
Ia. Strict Nature Reserve											
Ib. Wildemess Area											
II. National Park											
III. Natural Monument											
IV. Habitat/ Species Management											
V. Protected Landscape/ Seascape											
VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources											

Figure 1: "The IUCN protected area matrix": a classification system for protected areas comprising both management category and governance type (modified from Dudley 2008).

Community conservation, currently touted as a possible solution to the evils and ills of conventional modes of nature preservation, is being formalized in ways that threaten biocultural diversity. This drama is playing out at multiple scales and at contested sites evoked in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Protected Areas Matrix (fig. 1), which has its roots in late twentieth-century efforts to standardize the recognition and categorization of conservation areas around the world (Dudley 2008). The matrix evolved

over the last 30 years as conservationists confronted the inconvenient presence of peoples and cultural landscapes within protected areas, considered a hindrance by believers in the purest forms of nature preservation. Debates on the role of local peoples in the quest for conservation and sustainability have intensified since parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity announced in October 2010 a new target to expand the protected area coverage to include 17 percent of the world's terrestrial surface within 10 years.

The official IUCN definition of “protected area” that emerged in 1994 bears witness to the tension between advocates of natural and of cultural diversity: “an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.” The inclusion of “other effective means”—with its oblique reference to customary law and civil society policies—hints at an emerging environmental and social justice agenda, whereas the mention of “cultural resources” makes explicit that local knowledge, practice, and belief are interwoven with natural features of land and seascapes.

Specific management categories show similar evidence of compromise and hybridity. Category V of the Matrix (protected landscapes/seascapes) proposes the safeguarding of areas where “the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural, and scenic value.” Its partner, Category VI (protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources), aims to “conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems.” In these protected area constructions, nature is no longer pristine and untouchable, but rather biocultural and exploitable. Despite recognition of the intrinsic interrelationship between biological and cultural diversity, conservationists continue to isolate “naturalness” as a measurable characteristic of protected and unprotected landscapes (fig. 2).

Proposals to add a governance dimension to the categories at the Durban Worlds Parks Congress (2003) and the Bangkok World Conservation Congress (2004) eventually resulted in the full matrix in use today. Familiar and new forms of governance, including by state governments, private entities, indigenous peoples, and local communities—or through collaborative management by partnerships among them—now dominate official conservation perspectives on who is empowered to make and implement decisions in protected areas.

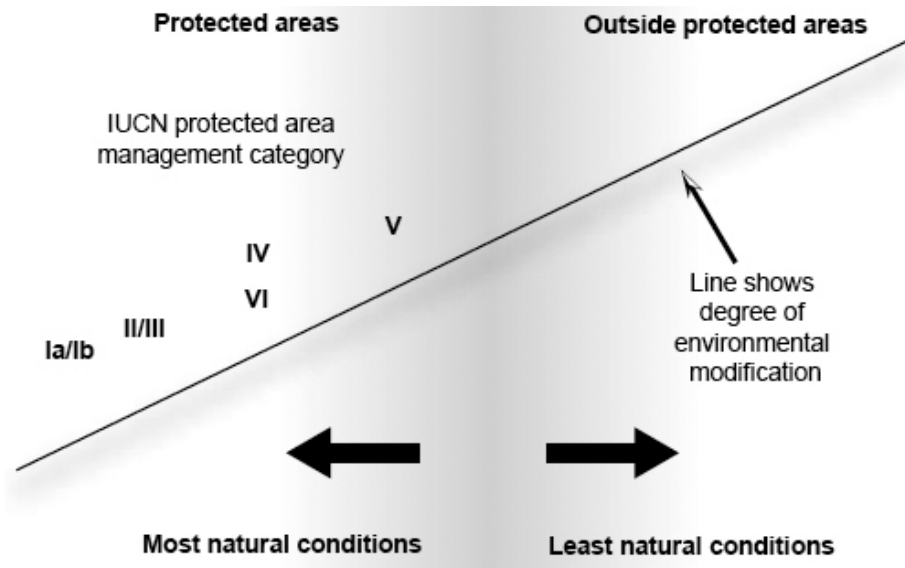


Figure 2: Naturalness and IUCN protected area categories: Many people assume that the categories imply a gradation in naturalness in order from I to VI but the reality is more complicated, as shown in Figure 2, which attempts to compare average naturalness of all the categories (modified from Dudley 2008).

Other actors play outside the margins of the matrix and around the boundaries of the IUCN and other international institutions. At meetings of the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), the logic of defining protected areas as clearly delimited geographical spaces is confronted by nomadic peoples and communities practicing various forms of mobility as a livelihood strategy. At the Parque de la Papa in Peru and other sites in South America, community members propose alternative designations such as Indigenous Biocultural Territories (IBCTs), which explicitly evoke not only the inextricable linkages between biological and cultural diversity but also politically-charged indigenous claims to land and resource tenure.

International organizations with diverse agendas collaborate and compete with the IUCN to achieve a common goal of conserving biocultural diversity in cultural landscapes. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations created a new initiative to safeguard and support traditional agricultural systems and landscapes tended by farmers and shepherds under the designation Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). Although the FAO counts the IUCN among its partners on the initiative, the position of GIAHS within the matrix of protected areas remains unspecified. The Christensen Fund is supporting nascent Ensete and Sor-

ghum Parks in Ethiopia, the result of transnational community-community exchanges. The matrix and its margins are riddled with hotspots where control over land and resources is disputed, and the legitimacy of lifestyles and livelihoods challenged. Areas strictly protected by governments or private entities continue to be a primary target for critiques because of the human rights violations perpetrated by fortress conservation, including displacement, deprivation of resources needed for basic health and nutrition, and loss of future subsistence and income options (Agrawal and Redford 2009; Lele et al. 2010). Collaborative management is attracting growing criticism, especially among those who characterize it as an anti-political tool to modify the relationship of local peoples with their environments and resources (Nadasdy 2005) in ways that covertly threaten biocultural diversity.

Indigenous Conserved Territories and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), a new IUCN governance category further validated at the Barcelona World Conservation Congress (2008), recognize the *de jure* or *de facto* authority of local communities to manage protected areas that have cultural, spiritual, and utilitarian significance for them. Official certification of ICCAs, which are expected to show conservation benefits according to conventional criteria, entangle communities in a web of international and national law and policy that threatens to impose exclusionary and preservationist measures under the guise of community conservation (Martin et al. 2010).

In a recent twist, the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI) seeks to embrace and co-opt the renegade category of Indigenous Biocultural Territories that has emerged in indigenous South America, equating them with Japanese Satoyama landscapes within an overall framework policy that promotes new forms of collaborative management and evolving commons while putatively respecting traditional communal land tenure.

These multiple ways of playing the IUCN matrix raise a provocative question (Apgar, Ataria, and Allen forthcoming): Are we destroying endogenous processes that generate biocultural diversity in our quest to conserve it? Far from the academic and policy venues where this ideological struggle plays out, community ethnography reveals flashpoints of conflict that deepen our preoccupation.

In the Ashaninka Communal Reserve in the Peruvian Amazon, government agencies, NGOs, and indigenous federations are wrestling for control of a nascent collaborative management plan that may ironically open the path for exploitation of oil resources in primary forest with foreseeable impacts on culture and nature (Caruso 2011). Chinantec Voluntary Conserved Areas in southern Mexico, subsidized by Payments for Environmental Services, may undermine the *milpa* agroecosystem and hunting practices that sustain food sovereignty (Ibarra et al. forthcoming). Micropolitics have undermined government efforts to support financially sustainable use of timber resources in a community forest reserve in Quintana Roo, deepening divisions in a heterogeneous Maya community (Wilshusen 2009).

Beyond Latin America, similar scenarios play out in apparently unexpected ways with unintended consequences. When this ensemble of experiences is assessed through meta-analysis, the outcomes may reveal themselves as all too predictable, intended to make biocultural diversity a sacrificial lamb in an errant quest for conservation and sustainability.

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